DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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21 OCT 1980

Dear Dr. Shriver:

Thank you for your letter to President Carter concerning the trial and sentencing of Mr. Kim Dae Jung and other defendents in the Republic of Korea and our policy toward that country. We appreciate your view, and welcome the opportunity to explain our position.

The U.S. Government has followed the trial of Mr. Kim and his co-defendents with intense interest and deep concern. We have strong feelings about the harsh verdict handed down in Mr. Kim's case. The Korean Government is fully aware of our views. Although we are not commenting further on the case now because it is under judicial review, our concern and our dialog with the Koreans continue.

Indeed, we share your concerns about this and other developments in the past several months and have repeatedly made our views known at the highest levels of the Korean Government. We have used every means at our disposal to urge that the Korean leadership move toward a more representative political system, and will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

William J. Dyess
Assistant Secretary of State
for Public Affairs

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President's Room

October 2, 1980

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Carter:

Yours has been an outstanding record of support for the cause of human rights in the world. As one of those who supported you in 1976 partly for that commitment, I admire that record. I urge you to remain faithful to it by taking strong, public action for the protection of human beings suffering from the erosion of democratic rights in contemporary South Korea.

The recent harsh sentences meted out by a Korean court to Kim Dae Jung and twenty-three other critics of dictatorial government are unconscionable to most of us Americans. We fought a war, with the South Koreans, for the sake of democracy's survival on that troubled peninsula. If those rights are ignored in such blatant fashion, what appeal will the government have over the government of North Korea? I recognize the deep involvement of U.S. business in South Korea, second in quantity only to that of Japan, and the profits made for U.S. stockholders from a militarily controlled and supposedly "stable" population. But for our government to ignore gross violations of human rights and be suspected of giving priority to profits over human beings will in the long run lead to loss of profits and any remaining U.S. credibility. Therefore many of us expect our government to make clear protest through all appropriate channels over what is now happening politically in Korea.

Our interest in democracy in the long run is our "national interest." Even if Kim Dae Jung and other democratic political leaders represent only some of Korea's people, they represent us, too. Theirs is the morale that we should most want to strengthen, inside the country, by our actions outside. When we fail to support them, we erode the morale of our own citizens who support you in human rights initiatives.

I know from private communications from Korea that the new president, through his control of the media, has not permitted even the mild recent critical statements of our State Department to be broadcast in the country. Does that not suggest that our armed forces network should be used so to broadcast it? And that other means be used to make it clear that Americans are distressed and outraged by the gross denial of elementary democratic rights in a country that boasts of being our ally?

If such rights are not worth supporting officially by our country in South Korea, Mr. President, we have no business continuing as its ally or its supporter.

Yours sincerely,

Donald W. Shriver, Jr.

Donald W. Shriver, Jr.
President